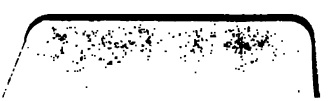

VOICES OF LIFE:

BY

MRS. EMILY P. LESDERNIER.

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

THE Author of these spirited and most touching Poems, has lately become favorably known to the intelligent public, by her "Select Readings and Recitations of Poetry and Dramatic Writings." She has adopted this mode of sustaining herself and her three children, left dependent on her exertions. Her own 'Lines' tell the sad tale of wrong and desertion, with such evident truth and deep pathos, that we need not add a word. Every generous heart must take an interest in the author.

Mrs. Lesdernier—she has assumed her maiden name—was born in Maine; her mother was a descendant of the Puritans, her father a Frenchman. She seems to unite the vivacity and versatility of the one race, with the steadfast purpose and persevering energy of the other. She evidently has a genius for the profession she is pursuing. We trust her talents will meet with warm encouragement. Her *cause* should be her passport to public favor.

Voices of the Sea.

Hear the voices of the sea,
Changing sea!
What vast deeps of tirelessness its constant beat foretells;
How it murmurs, murmurs, murmurs
Through the long and murky night!
While the stars are draped in dimness
This old ocean in his grimness
Ceaseless rolls.

Hear the dashing of the sea,
Angry sea!
On the strand how turbulent and sullenly it swells,
Ever drifting, drifting, drifting

High the sea-weeds on the beach,
While the crested foam banks, bearing
The poor fisher's skiff, are tearing
From the shore.

With the surgings of the sea,
Hark! a voice—
What a tale of hopelessness that wild beseeching tells:
Now 'tis wailing, wailing, wailing
To the deaf sea's maddening roar—
While the stars are draped in dimness
This old ocean in its grimness
Ceaseless rolls.

Standing here upon the beach—
Watching waves,
What a throb of restlessness their ebb and flow impels:
Ever moaning, moaning, moaning
Like my lorn heart's dismal beat,
As the shivering waves bewailing
Fold my feet—then bound as quailing
At the touch.

Thou art faithless, oh! thou sea,
Ruthless sea,
Know'st thou aught of pity, in thy palpitating clasp,
Ever throbbing, throbbing, throbbing
To that chill death-muffled heart,
And dear head my bosom cherished—
Now from earth forever perished—
Mournful sea!

Hear the voices of the sea,
Thrilling sea!
What a depth of sorrow in that melancholy tone—
Ever sobbing, sobbing, sobbing
With its mighty power of wo,
While the stars are draped in dimness
This old ocean in his grimness
Ceaseless rolls.

A Vision of Life.

Tossing restless on my pillow, through the thickly visioned night,
Like a wreck upon the billow, compass lost and beacon light,

All around me swept the Passions, threatening there my trembling barque,
'Gainst the spectral headlands crashing—dangerous land-marks grim and stark.

Phantom Fears, foul train of monsters, pale Revenge, with lurid eye,
Mad Ambition, syren songsters! save me from the 'wildering cry.

Love with wooing smiles did shimmer, by a hazy torch-light bland,
Glad I sought the pleasing glimmer, closed my arms through rushing sand.

Frenzied Hopes amid the dashing, grasp me with their iron might,
And these fierce things round me clashing, overwhelmed me with affright—

Whirled me out to sink in ocean, and beneath the turbid wave,
Crushed and helpless, without motion, deep where storm nor wind can rave.

There, methought, an age I slumbered, in the calm beneath the sea,
Fathoms far above me numbered myriad shapes, once ills to me.

Then I felt a coward pleasure, creeping thro' my heart and brain,
"I have 'scaped the bond of nature, I am free from sin and pain."

O'er the pathless waste were fleeting, stately galleons staunch and proud—
Vibrant din, perpetual beating, hiss of fire and smoke-wreathed shroud.

And my spirit caught in glimpses, dreams of rest from human toil,
When tried souls find light to grow in, fed by learning's sacred oil.

Now from storm-heaved surface booming sounds of wo and blank dismay
Tempest-hurled, dark clouds are looming—blackest night obscures the way.

Whirlwinds grapple with each other, like fierce foes on battle plain,
One tall ship, and lo! another strew their fragments o'er the main.

Then I heard shrieks from the dying—then the gurgling of the sea—
As they sank, faint motion plying, through the surges sank to me ;

One, a youth of noble daring, sought to save his new-made bride,
In his arms his treasure bearing ;—soon they rested, side by side.

Yester-morn a chaplet wreathing, decked her brow with rapture's hue ;
But, to-day, for her are weaving, ocean pearls and salt sea yew.

No more struggle. Now in quiet through the coral groves they glide—
Fate for them hath spoke the fiat, checked the pulse of life's warm tide.

And I felt that coward pleasure through my senses stealing in,
" I have 'scaped," I cried, " from nature, I am free from pain and sin."

Then I thought, weak and inglorious, thus to shun the upper day,
Rouse thee ! conquer ! be victorious, spurn the fetters of delay.

Circling cycles, ever creeping, in the noiseless step of Time,
While the dust, his mantle sweeping, buries deep the age of crime.

The old crumbling feudal glory, toppling from its ancient rock,
Tolls the knell of antique story, as the time-worn shackles drop.

Each and all must fill the measure, heap the mound and draw the line,
'Mid the clangings of endeavor, weary mortals wail and pine.

Forge the bolt and ring the anvil, build machines to baffle pride,
Let the sage toil o'er the embers, hope and life his arts decide.

Tyrant man may find his pleasure, in his power to crush the poor,
Every groan swells on eternal, and God's justice! it is sure.

But why rail against the masters, since the slaves contented stand,
Their *own fire* the steel must temper, that shall cut this ancient band.

Fear not then to rear your altars, and stand by them firm and true,
Glory's nursling never falters! Tread the UPAS where it grew.

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[illegible] be victorious, spurn the fetters of

The Vigil of the Homeless.

The homes! the homes! how fair they stand,
  Against the twilight sky;
The glowing tints of parting day
O'er window-panes, in gorgeous play,
  Like golden phantoms, fly.
The waving trees make music sweet,
The clinging vines, embracing, greet
The creeping tendrils softly meet,
In the hum of the passing lay.

It has faded now—yet a holy light
  Falls 'round the trellised bowers;
I hear the low and sweet "good night"
  From the infant buds to the flowers:
Within the homes how the faces glow
  In the fire-light's fitful shine;
Fond kindred hearts in union grow
  Where the hopes of Love entwine.

To the noxious vapors seething, bruised by press of many feet,
Till the power from firm souls breathing, shall make pure the poisonous heat.

In its place then, plant the olive, ever hallowed, holy tree,
From that mountain where the pale leaves trembled with Christ's agony.

Ye, to-day, the seed are sowing—soon shall leaves and buds appear,
Ah! the fruit is long in growing—when 'tis ripening thou'rt not here.

Yet thy children reap the blessing from thy life so richly brought,
And their children onward pressing seek to wear thy crown of thought.

From divine predestinations, which primeval love records,
From oblivion's outer *darkness*, ring the far prophetic words:

"Hark! through countless generations, angel legions marshal on,
Rolling in grand diapasons peals of joy and glory won."

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Fond kindred hearts in union grow
  Where the hopes of Love entwine.

The homes ! the homes ! how calm they gleam
  In the hush of the midnight hours ;
The souls within are dreaming now ;
Rapturous sleep o'er the pallid brow
  Its hallowed mysteries showers,
Night hath tones for the dreamer's ear,
Which thrill the watching soul with fear ;
Spirits of awe are gathering near—
I know, I feel, I see them here !

The shadows of dream-land are flitting away,
  Like clouds from the wind god's breath ;
I stand alone in the morning gray,
  I have waited all night for death.
My locks are damp with the chilling dew,
  And my eyes are dim with tears ;
Oh, God ! may the homeless ones be few
  In the rush of thy rolling years !

A Romance.

"There is a love all purified from sense,
Which in its white ethereal essence hath
A flame, than such more lastingly intense:
It is a *kindred soul's unsexed omnipotence.*"

ISLAND BRIDE.

I've gazed upon thy noble form,
And heard thy thrilling voice,
Thy words had music in their tones
Which bade my heart rejoice.
Thy presence, as a blessed shrine,
Is hallowed unto me,
I fain would linger where thou art,
And e'en thy handmaid be.
But that high prompting of the soul,
Which thou hast bid me cherish,
Leads to a prouder destiny,
That I will win, or perish;
Prouder, but not so brightly glad,
As ministering unto thee,
In gentle acts of holy love,
Beneath thy household tree.

The old romantic legends
  By minstrels sung of yore,
With all the changeful glowing hues,
  Of proud chivalric lore,
Come thronging with their gorgeous gleams
  Across my busy brain,
And shadowy phantoms pale and stern,
  Flit by—a pictured train.
A noble knight in armor clad,
  With a fair page by his side,
Who in the hour of danger bore
  His master's spear with pride ;
And when the strife was raging high,
  The turmoil wild and grim,
With eyes of watchful triumph stood
  Fearless, to die for him !

But when from bloody carnage safe,
  With laurels proudly earned,
At twilight hour, back to his tent,
  The weary knight returned—
Oh gently then the armor was
  Unlaced from his martial form,
The vizor's clasps were quickly riven,
  Though stained by war's red storm ;
The cooling draughts to his lips were pressed,
  The drops from his broad brow fanned,
And the low, sweet lute, with its silvery tone,
  Was touched with a skilful hand ;
A prayer was breathed, as he sank to his rest,
From the full, fond heart, 'neath the page's vest,

And hushed and still as the starlight gleams,
A vigil is kept o'er the slumberer's dreams.

Vain, vain is the thought! it may not be—
Not here may I minister thus to thee,
For thine is an armor of heaven's own proof,
And to loose thee, when weary, from clasp or woof,
Thou need'st not the aid of a mortal hand;—
The light of thine eyes, love, is pure and bland,
As if commune with saints, from the better land,
Had left an impress, forever to stand,
A sign and a seal of the angel band.

If the heart's deep wish can ought avail,
I shall soar with thee on the heavenly gale;
I shall see thy face on the trackless shore,
And thy spirit-bride be forever more.

I claim in the strength of a troubled soul,
  And a heart made pure by trial here;
To stand by thy side at the seraph-goal,
  To wait on thy steps in the upper sphere.

My Island Home.

My Island Home! fond love for thee
Still trails along my memory—
  The dim old notes resounding,
While freighted argosies of thought,
The heart's rich pearls with the past inwrought,
  O'er the billowy swell are bounding,
      With the hum of years
        In the roll of time,
      My childhood's tears,
        My restless prime,
          And the plaintive knell
          Of the sad soul-bell,
From the wreck all my hopes surrounding.

The wild waves kiss your rugged cliffs—
  Cliffs of my native shore;
The lashing tides against your breast
  Their wrathful surges pour;
Your huge gray tops the dank mists crown,
  When reign the Fog King's band,
And a foaming crest veils Neptune's frown,
  As he roars along the strand:

But the sunbeams creep,
And with victor sweep
Falls the dispelling ray,
And the shadowy hosts,
Like pallid ghosts,
Melt in an hour away.
Then smile the pretty blue-bells,
O'er all the rifted slopes,
Clinging, with graceful sweetness,
Types of innocent young hopes:
And all around is beauty,
And all above is light,
While far down in the deep sea's cave
Sings the pale water-sprite—
As that pensive "*Ula-lula*" floats,
The white gull stoops her wings,
And with a weird-like motion,
To the briny swell she swings;
Poised—like a thing enchanted,
She rocks upon the wave,—
As that pensive "*Ula-lula*" floats
From out the deep sea's cave.

My Island Home, I love thee!
Thou loveliest 'mid them all,
That number as the YEAR'S DAYS
In old Time's record call;
So many are the Islands, that cluster in the bay,
And forever are encircled by the Ocean's dashing spray:
Ye are as fair crown jewels, in a glittering casket pressed,
As the shining waters hold ye, in flashing beauty dressed.

The hours of day are numbered,
  As the cannon's booming roar,
With sonorous resonance,
  Proclaims, from shore to shore,
The rosy light is fading
  On rampart, wall and tower;
The drums beat the "reveille"
  With the roll of warlike power:
The bugle, from the Fortress,
  Rings out a pealing strain,
And back, the eyried Eagle
  Shrieks her pæan o'er the main.—
But hearken! with the echoes,
  As they faint on sea and shore,
I hear a cadenced timing,
  As of convent vespers, pour;
Comes it from yonder headland,
  Where the gray cowled Friar stands,
In dim sepulchral grandeur—
  Huge monarch of the sands?
Hark! to the chanted "ave"
  Of the legendary Nuns,
"Ave sanctissima" echoes whisper,
  Pity the deserted ones;
"Dulcis virgo, O purissima;"
  List, ah, list, their suppliant tones!
Thus ever, from the sunset hour,
  Till swells the midnight chime,
Those sorrowing spirits murmur,
  Aves of a summer clime:

And, blending with the quivering light
  That pleading chant is heard,
With the murmur in the evening wind,
  The boatman's soul is stirred—
And he paused on his dripping oar,
  To list the phantom prayer,
As it ripples on the dark, wild sea,
  Then sinks in still despair—
For an instant spirit-thrillings
  Entrance his stern, cold brow,
As strike along the human chords,
  The mystery of wo ;
But in pulseless, marble silence,
  The gray Friar's lips are bound,
We vainly question destiny,
  The limitless profound :
But all around is beauty—
  And all above is light,
While far down in the deep sea's cave,
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To ———.

I WOULD not in anger chide thee,
  Though thy deeds have been my bane ;
Though the deluge fierce hath swept me
  Filled my soul with hopeless pain :

Love's bright dream all rudely ended,
  Wakened by a sable wing,
Shutting out the holy sunlight,
  Folding the deep midnight in.

There I brooded in the darkness,
  Till my scorching brain did swim,
And my heart swelled in the blackness
  Till hope burst the surging brim !

Years have rolled since that sad parting,
  And the dull gray thread of life—
Woven 'mid the fires of Etna,
  Quenched oft by sorrow's strife—

Though its woof can ne'er be blended,
  Still 'tis mingling with the chime
Of the vibrant chords that echo,
  From the murmuring harp of time ;

Music writ in burning letters,
  Pleasures cadenced into pain—
Thou it was that forged the fetters—
  Would that I could break the chain !

For the galling links of iron
  Rust within the human heart,
And the soaring spirit's fettered
  By the poison and the smart.

Yet there is one pulse still throbbing
  With the old accustomed power ;
There's one chord I would not sever,
  Though the world were pledged my dower :

'Tis the sweet parental cestus,
  Binding in a mutual thrill
Buds of love our God did give us—
  With our life their pulses rill.

They, the little tender nurslings,
  Clustering at their mother's knee,
And, with faces full of wonder,
  Ask, "Where can our father be ?"

Yet, for their sake, I, in silence,
  Hold my quivering heart that bleeds,
That I cannot, for example,
  Point them to their father's deeds!

Thou hast thrown aside thy duty;
  But a mother's heart is strong,
And to win life's fearful battle,
  I will wrestle 'mid the throng;

Brave the tempest's clashing thunder—
  With unflinching soul and eye,
To hope's broken plank still clinging—
  Stem the tide, or 'neath it die!

Biology.

She stood before that stranger crowd alone;
  Vainly to move her trembling lips sought power,
Till on her beating heart a bright ray shone.
  She knew not whence but oh! a priceless dower
It fell with saving dews, in needful hour;
  Turning, she met that full quick earnest glance,
And peaceful as the clouds in summer skies
Her soul springs up, rapt in a thrilling trance
To thank him for the praise that silence did enhance.

Within pale memory's cells, a thought did flash
  As of a vision old and half forgot:
In her waked sense the electric chain did clash
  Beneath his spirit's touch—her lonely lot
Faded in dreamings—yet she heeded not
  The gathered throng—"We two, at Lethe's well
Have quaffed forgetfulness in her dark grot,
Yet gleam the chain's bright links with magic spell
Timing with single might two hearts' impulsive swell."

"Perchance 'mid boundless realms of space untold,
Where myriad forms of living ether float,
Where heaven's starry banners are unrolled
We have united dwelt *one* shining *mote*,
Launched from the skies by Jove's unerring bolt
Did we two find one wavelet's breast our bed,
Thus sleeping cradled in our tiny boat,
Upward by promise of the day-god led,
Heat-wrought to human souls, on separate mission sped."

"But now this kindred essence of the soul
Bounds self to self—oblivion's wastes are past!
List not thy spirits to the far off roll,
Booming throughout thy nature deep and vast,
Telling thoul't reach the primal goal at last,
And gathered in by fate's revolving wheel,
Thy mission crowned with life's eventful cast,
Humanity thou'lt comprehend, and feel
What gods might covet—scars of sorrow's signet seal.

Inbocation.

Come, wreathe thy spells of heaven-born might
  Around my pallid brow ;
Bid my eyes glow with prophet-light,
  My soul fulfil her vow.

And with a heart all seared by wrong—
  From those who should have striven
To save it from life's fierce maelstroms,
  And strengthened it for heaven.

I'll prove, though crushed this heart has been,
  E'en like the gentle flower,
Its fragrance sweet will upward spring,
  In sorrow's darkest hour.

And though the storm impetuous beat
  On my defenceless head,
I'll lure some phantom still to cheat
  My soul from fear and dread.

I'll snatch one laurel from the wreath
  On Genius' flushing brow ;
And, wafted by Ambition's breath,
  I'll steer my shallop's prow.

As through the molten waves I press,
  The haven before me see,
'Twill fire the languor of my breast,
  To feel me worthy thee ;

'Tis for THY sake I fearless tread
  The tangled maze of Time,
Would lay me on Prometheus' bed,
  To win one smile of thine.

But thou, unconscious of thy power
  My happiness to be,
Wilt linger still in Fancy's bower,
  Undmindful all of me.

While I the toilsome steep shall climb,
  Unheeded and alone,
Thou'lt bask in Beauty's loving smile,
  And clasp her trembling zone.

O heaven-born Genius, wilt thou not
  Touch with thy magic wing,
The throbbing heart and dreaming soul,
  That tempts the Pierian spring ?

Fill me with glory's visions bright,
  Give to me passion's fire;
That I may strike with master-hand
  The heart's deep ringing lyre!

Lines.

On the Laying of the Cap-stone of Bunker Hill Monument, Charlestown, June 17th, 1844.

WHAT means this rush of life-like ocean's swell?
List the deep thunder from the cannon's throat—
Blent with glad shouts poured forth in Freedom's name!
The air is rent with chaunts to Liberty!
And stately throngs press on with martial drums
And ringing bugle tones, and all the pomp
And pageant, that some new-wrought tribute brings,
Linked with dear memory's chain of glorious deeds
Done long ago on the green heights of Bunker!
They pause around the towering pile, the shaft
That, sparkling there in rosy sunlight, points
Heavenward, unto our own Eagle's home!
And now one mighty crash of cheers swells forth,
And then is hushed in death-like stillness and repose,
Each sound of music, or of mirth; the crowd
Silence profound has chained; fixed are all eyes
On him, the *nation's orator*.—Sublime
He stands with noble mien in manhood's strength—
Our Webster, the high-souled, deep-thoughted one,
His voice of melody, his flashing eyes,

And words of graceful power soft echoes find
Within each heart where patriotism dwells.
The gray-haired veteran bent by time, but hears
His words, and springs, renewed, to youth again.
  Before him pass in sad array,
  The visions of that battle day
  Again he drops a soldier's tear
  O'er martyred Warren's shrouded bier ;
  Again he hears the battle cry,
  On—on, to Victory !
  And not in vain rang forth the sound,—
  By victory were their efforts crown'd !
  They fought for Freedom—valor's prize—
  Though human life the sacrifice ;
We press the soil bought by our fathers' blood
And lift our hearts in thankfulness to God !

  Wave bright banner—badge of Freedom,
    Graceful ensigns flout the air,
  Peal rich strains of martial music—
    Fire the brave—subdue the fair.

We Meet No More.

Thou dost not miss my step within thy Hall,
My voice within thy bower ; thy home is full
Of beauty and of love, but thee I miss.
The garden path, where late thy foot hath trod,
Is sacred unto me as Paynim shrine
To the blind worshipper of India's faith :
I seek thy last faint footprint in the sand,
And muse for hours above the unconscious dust ;
And musing thus, my thoughts go out to try
The riches of the heart.—Why dwell I thus
Alone—apart from human sympathy ?
Why trails yon rose-tree from its bursted bands
Along the ground ? blooms it as brightly there ?
Did weight of its own wealth of beauty loose
The slender thread that bound it in its pride
To that grim wall—found it no genial warmth,
Save that enkindled by the amorous sun,
Piercing the coldest stone with joyous light—
Perchance the loving leaped up there to thank
With dewy sweets that softly wooing ray,
Not scanning well the distance 'twixt them set—
Essayed in vain thro' intervening space—

And so fell back in impotent despair.
Thus all her blooming glories lay assoiled
In lowly earth? No answer comes from thee,
Thou who wast wont to be my Mentor, now
Art blessed with fairer love than I might bring.
The vine neglected hangs, a thriftless dower,
Adown my cottage eves—it lacks thy care
To husband all its purple wealth, as erst
Thou didst when timid love thy sway confessed,
Held both hands heaped to thee! Unconscious now
I pluck the fruit my lips refuse to taste——
Ah! blame not thou my murmuring strain, it will
Not rest this wayward heart of mine: the strings
Of my poor gittern are all wrecked—the last
Snapped yesterday; it seemed a living thing
To pine away its strength, and, one by one,
The cords shrank slack and tuneless, till they broke
'Neath my faint touch. Its music sweetly trilled
To my glad voice's chime in days of yore;
All silent now the tender cadenced lay.
Some while do I forget, thou'rt gone for aye,
I strive to think thy absence one of those
Long weary hours myself had bid thee forth
For thy best good. Oh! that sad time of poor,
Sweet wretchedness! E'en that is lost to me:
I deemed not then that there would come a day
When I should call thee back, and thou not hear
My cry; thou hast said tears are weak, and I
Forbear to let my eyelids sleep with dew;
To help their weight—I dream—and in my dreams
I look into thine eyes, and sunny hopes

Are laughing in my soul ! *We meet no more*—
Is my first waking thought, then droops my head,
And the unbraided hair falls massy damp
About my pallid cheeks—for thee I wore
These raven tresses once in shining bands
Above my glowing brow, that flushed with love's
Own light when thou wert by to praise ; my hands,
Pale tremblers, fail to do their office more,
The unstrung gittern and the unpruned vine,
With this dark tangled tresses' sable shroud unfold
My deep despair—gray desolation stoops
On hurtling wing, breaking the deathlike hush,
And wakes my soul to life's full bitterness.

The Pearly Gates.

I sit by my dim hearth, mother,
  A watcher sad and lone,
And visions of the olden time
  Come stealing through the gloom ;
I hear thy gentle voice, mother,
  As it was wont to sound,
And the cadence sweet and tender trills
  Through every nook around ;
I start and stretch my weary arms
  To clasp thee once again,
Alas ! it was but fancy's dream
  Haunting my wandering brain.

The dream was very sweet, mother,
  The dear old memories come,
With many a light and tender gleam,
  Calling the wanderer home.
The whispering trees in the grove, mother,
  The song of the gurgling rill,
Are music heard and deeply felt
  Within my sad soul still.

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I know that thou wilt pray, mother,
  When shadows grim and wild,
Are falling in the quiet room,
  Where oft thou hast blest thy child—
And, oh ! the very words, mother,
  Sound like a mournful wail,
Across the waste of memory,
  "Dark with the serpent's trail."
Thou prayed'st that evil days
  Might pass thy darling by,
And hours in which no pleasure lived
  Might never her come nigh.

Thy fervent prayer had power, mother ;
  Oh ! it has been a spell,
When the world looked cold and dreary
  In balmy dews it fell—
Soothing the tortured soul, mother,
  And whispering "Peace, be still,"
To all the deep and bitter founts
  That swell the proud heart's rill ;
The fevered pulse is stilled, mother,
  And beams of heavenly light
Fall from the pearly gates
  And soothe my aching sight.

FINIS.